

Issue Paper for Oregon Technical Advisory Committee

Topic:	Effective investment of Oregon EQIP funding to address Oregon's priority natural resource needs	
Presenter / Sponsor(s):	Bill White, NRCS, Leader for Programs	
Issue Statement:	New Farm Bill rules has removed the required 65% / 35% split of EQIP funding to priority areas and to statewide concerns. Oregon can establish its own fund allocation process to focus EQIP funds on its priorities – state wide and local.	
Action Required:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review & Discussion <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Advice Requested	<input type="checkbox"/> Information <input type="checkbox"/> Other:: _____
Background:	EQIP fund allocation at the state level has required that at least 65% of its EQIP allocation to fund contracts within geographic priority areas (GPA). Statewide resources concerns were to be allocated no more than 35%. GPAs are watershed based, funding requests to address the most serious soil, water or related natural resource concerns. GPAs were competitively ranked for funding. Statewide resource concerns were identified in cooperation with the STAC. The concerns have characteristics similar to GPAs but are located outside a funded GPA and are not confined to a specific watershed.	
Progress / Current Status:	<p>In Oregon EQIP funding decisions are made based on Basin priorities. Each Basin Work Groups receives GPAs from LAG. The GPA proposals are ranked within each Basin and then submitted to the NRCS State Office. Since 1997, EQIP funding was assured for each basin's first priority GPA, second priorities were funded as funds permitted. Statewide concern funds were allocated towards 3 priorities statewide: Mid-Columbia, Healthy Watershed and Salmon Habitat. Each was allocated funds based on the expressed need in a respective basin and the ability to meet the NRCS workload. Each Basin developed scheduled signups, ranking criteria and cost lists.</p> <p>Mid year corrections were made to shift funding to other Basins as available and as needed.</p>	
Technical / Staff Recommendation:	<p>A revised funding allocation process is proposed to build on the OACD business planning process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Oregon should retain priority areas and one statewide concerns, i.e., watershed health. ▪ OTAC will provide broad recommendations to the NRCS STC and the FSA SED on how conservation funds should be invested. ▪ Funds should be allocated to the Basin for funding their resource priorities as described in their funding request. ▪ Each basin develops a funding request built from SWCD business plans and BWG priorities. BWG will rank and prioritize requests. ▪ The funding request will address not only EQIP funding opportunities but also WHIP and other conservation programs. ▪ Allocation process will consider each Basin's funding request with respect to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ NRCS and SWCD workloads and technical resources ▪ Long term resource and conservation needs in the Basin ▪ Land use concerns in the Basin ▪ Leveraging with Non-NRCS funds and assistance. ▪ "Ready, willing and able – ness" of the people in the Basin to utilize the funds ▪ NRCS and the BWG implement the funding through conservation plans with eligible applicants. 	
Attachment:		